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1. At a congress of the National Assembly (Bundestag) of the East German Kulturbund held in Dresden on 11-14 March 1954. National Secretary Karl Kneschke gave the main speech. It had been planned that Johannes R. Becher, East German Minister of Culture, would speak, but he was unable to do so because of illness. Further speakers included Alexander Abusch, Domprediger Karl Kleinschmidt, Arnold Zweig, Professor Ernst Bloch, Gertrud Sasse, Heinrich Deiters, Heinrich Becker, and Albert Donle.

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2. After Kneschke's introductory speech, an unidentified guest delegate [] attacked the style of the Kulturbund propaganda publications which were flooding West Germany. He declared that West Germans refused to read this Party jargon (Parteichinesisch) and that the publications could not be distributed for this reason.
3. The next speaker was Arnold Zweig who stated that many young people were complaining bitterly that they had to spend all their time in political activity or working and had absolutely no free time. Zweig suggested that the Kulturbund set up an office to receive complaints of this type. He said that in East Germany the concept of free time, which is so important for the proper development of young people, has been entirely lost. Zweig declared that every bit of free time a young person has he is forced to use to work on some speech or other. He stated that it was a mistake in the East German system to want to change everything completely, because in doing this there is the danger of hurting the individual. He asserted that it was the task of the Kulturbund to warn about such over-organization and stated that it must be realized that humanism and strict organization are not compatible.
4. Zweig's remarks were greeted by a tremendous ovation, and Gertrud Sasse, Derserving Teacher of the People and member of the Presidial Council of the Kulturbund, who was the chairman, had great difficulty in restoring order. A ten minute recess was therefore declared.
5. The next speaker was Professor Ernst Bloch. He stated that he agreed with Arnold Zweig's remarks and believed that not only the youth of East Germany was endangered but also "the youthfulness of the movement". He stated

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that direction and order were needed but that the result should not be regimentation. Constant repetition had sapped the life blood of the great Marxist slogans. He pointed out that during the Weimar Republic the Marxist slogans had had life and attraction and had been expressions of a living, advancing front. He compared the conditions of the present day to those of a declining movement. The chief reason for this unhappy situation, he stated, was that the Communist movement lacked life and had calcified. He demanded that research be given freedom and stated that if Marx were really omnipotent and had taught the truth he was in no danger if freedom of research were allowed. His remarks were also greeted with loud, long applause.

6. Heinrich Deiters stated that as a student of educational theory he seconded Zweig's demands for more free time for youth. He demanded further that Party jargon ("Parteichinesisch bzw. Kaderwelsch") be eliminated and that teachers be allowed more freedom and initiative.
7. Heinrich Becker, Hero of Labor and Director of the Bibliographical Institute, stated that he agreed with Deiters and Zweig, and as proof of the veracity of their remarks pointed to the lack of interest displayed by the East German public in the latest Duden editions.
8. In his concluding remarks Kneschke attacked all previous speakers very sharply. He took exception particularly to their attacks against the speech of the Party, stating that it was a national duty to advance the science of linguistics.
9. On the following day State Secretary Alexander Abusch held the ideological speech and presented the SED party line on cultural affairs. He was followed by Kleinschmidt, who stated that Zweig's idea of giving the youth more free time was dangerous because the enemy could take advantage of such tactics. He accused Zweig of endangering the class struggle, stating that it was this struggle and the tempo dictated by the enemy, not over-organization, which were responsible for the lack of free time.
10. Albert Donle, leader of the Berlin delegation, also attacked the past program of the National Secretariat and stated that the level of entertainment in the cultural rooms of the East German factories was very low and nothing more than a worthless miscellany.
11. The congress concluded with the purely formal election of a new Presidial Council of 60 members. The list has been previously selected by the National Secretariat, and there was little discussion of any of the candidates, all of whom were "elected".

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[] Comment: None of the anti-Party-line discussions appeared in the East German press. The only exception was a condensed version of Zweig's remarks which the LDP organ Saechsisches Tageblatt, published the following day. This article in the Saechsisches Tageblatt was taken back to the various Bezirke by most of the delegates, so that Zweig's remarks had a much greater resonance than they would have otherwise.

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[] Comment: This near rebellion against the SED cultural line is a unique phenomenon. There has been nothing similar since the attack of Wolfgang Harich in the East Berlin Berliner Zeitung immediately after 17 June 1953. Harich also castigated SED cultural policies but was subsequently forced back into line by Wilhelm Girmus and Walter Besenbruch, the SED cultural dictators.

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